

March 25--Maximum effort called for mission to Zeitz. Took off at 5:05 in blinding rain in the dark and skidded all over the runway. Gyro-horizon lagging and just caught other instruments in time to yank the Shack higher. (later found out that the Crew Chief had pulled out a piece of tree branch from the tail wheel) Returned to base after flying formation in thunder storms and heavy clouds at about 50 feet and less for 2 hours and 30 minutes. Bad cross wind on landing, and helluva time. Really sweated it out because we had about 2500 gals. of gas aboard and 12--500 lbs. of GP's and 1000 lbs. of IB's aboard. Kearney in ship ahead of me landed with wings on fire to make me sweat a little more.

March 26--Mission to Ruhr Valley scrubbed. Patten got to the target first. Found out that Frank Biorn was in the hospital at Diddington and the Joe T. Clark had been killed. Got a truck and Fischer, Mac, Pengra and I went to see Frank. Was not seriously hurt, small piece of flack in right calf. Joe was hit hard in left hip and died in station hospital. That night we had a little squadron party and I got pretty high--kind of had it coming for some time. Even Pengra, who never touches a drop, had his share tonight.

March 27--Mission to Schweinfurt scrubbed due to weather. Got permission to go to Joe T.'s funeral. Fisher, Pengra, Jones, Dragoo and I went to Cambridge where American Cemetary is. Town is very old and nothing but colleges. Met Bob Perry and Frank's whole crew at Red Cross and went to funeral with them. Services were very impressive with 20 chaplains present. About 40 men were buried at one time. Cemetary is very large and many graves are there.

March 28--Day very dull--Had link in the morning and evening.

March 29--Had long SOP session in A.M. Afternoon had no duties. Went to town about 6:30 but came back early.

March 30--Mission to Vegesack (Visual)

Crew:All

Target--Sub Pens

Ship--Flack Shack

Time--8:20

Carried 2 Disney Bombs externally. Heaviest load a B-17 has ever carried in combat--better than 70,000 pounds. Flew 6 ship squadrons instead of the usual 12. Was sweating out the take off, but it wasn't bad at all. Made four bomb runs and flack was damned accurate. On the first run Clem was knocked down by a piece of flack which hit his helmet. It glanced off of him and hit Phillippi's flack suit--both unhurt. Next run wasn't bad. Third run they were waiting for us and plastered hell out of the group. Two bursts on the underside jolted me out of the seat and I could feel numerous bursts on the controls. Fourth run was just as bad. One piece of the flack came in right waist and went out left then through stabilizer. One piece passed between Tex and I and another nicked top of cockpit about 3 inches from my head. We could now smell the powder from the Jerry shells. On the ground we discovered about 35 holes and armor plate saved Clem. Had to have new gas tank in #2 because of size of holes, and a new left stabilizer. However, we really plastered the target.

Mr. Strong

It is difficult to
talk about Allen's death.
After fifty years of marriage
I guess it will never
be easy.

Allen very much
enjoyed the 306 publication,
and always looked
forward to its arrival.

Thank you for your
sympathy.

Betty Babin